

Testament: A Half Life 2 prequel Part 1

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Summary: I wrote this to depict the formation of Kleiner's lab in City 17. If enough people like it I will keep it going. I don't own anything plz don't sue me Valve :

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"5th, 2nd, 4th, 6th, right?" queried Barney as he depressed the buttons on the vending machine to Kleiner's lab. As he spoke he pressed the last button in the sequence distinctively, nothing; the machine stood there, its electric buzz mocking him as it resounded through the tunnel. Just relieved from his shift, his patience didn't seem too fain to cooperate. He eventually just banged on the machine like he so often has to.

"Hey, Doc?" shouted Barney, slight irritation not entirely absent from his voice. "C'mon I want to get out of this get-up; all this oppression is bad for my skin." His joke stemmed from Barney's actual contempt for the uniform, which was profuse. Donning the heavy, dehumanizing outfit he always felt trapped in the skin of some pragmatic monster. Being forced, at times, to actually enforce the suppression wasn't particularly motivating either.

"Doc?" he asked again, only to be met with silence.

"Nahâ€|" he thought. "Couldn't beâ€|"

Kleiner was way too smart for that right? The silence beyond the machine stoked his concern. His disconcertion grew abreast the silence. A long 5 seconds passed.

A nasally voice shattered his vexation instantly. "Yes, Barney, what is it?" Barney's tension left him, as well as a big breath, which he made sure the Doc didn't hear.

Relieved, Barney began "Doors on the fritz again, doc. 'Told ya a

password would be better."

Noise of tinkering roused from the other side; Barney continued.

"OPEN SES-AM-E, that sort of thing; even a fake bookcase where'd ya just pull a book. It would fit you well; "Isaac's Laboratory" we could call it, like some old cartoon." He smiled a little.

The tinkering stopped, the vending machine shifted in place, and then slowly began to slide to the tune of its distinct whirring motor. Kleiner was revealed in its wake; his attire accented with his typical lab coat.

"You know, I'd actually like nothing better than a thoroughly laden bookcase" remarked Kleiner sardonically.

"For Christmas; I'll think about it." He humored him even though he knew it was impossible.

Kleiner smiled and turned back around to reenter the lab; Barney followed.

"So what's this about Doc?"

Barney looked up for a moment realizing how cliché that was.

"Over here, Barney, if you would."

The lab was awfully meager and likely, at any other point in time, it could not rightfully be referred to as a lab. There was but a single computer on a table that Barney worked arduously to save from the Civil Protection's "detrimental paraphernalia" squad; alongside it countless papers without order lay scattered as well as a lone microscope. The security camera array that Barney had been installing sat atop another table on the left side of the room, as well as the monitors he was going to devote to that purpose. Kleiner led them to an impromptu table of a few stacked crates; the lab seemed always to be changing its "furniture". On it there was what looked like some maps and a letter. They seated themselves opposite each other.

Kleiner started "The other agents have successfully liberated portions of the equipment I seek at a steady, albeit stalled, gait. We should have actual operational machinery worthy of the term within the month. However," Kleiner looked directly at Barney "I've been convened with a bit of news of the most beautiful nature."

Kleiner rarely used poetic terminology so Barney immediately became interested.

"You don't say." Pleaded Barney

"Yes, Barney, what, may I ask, is the most dangerous weapon all? The starkest bane of any attempt to yoke a society, as history has proven?" Kleiner intertwined his fingers and set them on the "table", clearly enjoying himself. A grin grew on his face.

Barney legitimately wanted to surmise the right answer, so he scoured his mind a moment. "Uh... these colors don't run?" answered Barney,

half expecting Kleiner's approbation for his clearly chivalrous proclamation.

Kleiner expected this, yet did nothing to stop Barney from saying it. "No, Barney, books!"

"Ha ha Doc." Barney made each "ha" very distinct. He suddenly felt like he was called here just to hear this nerdy joke.

"I am gravely serious, Barney, another one of our confederates within Civil Protection has been tasked with seeing port of a large cache of literature from a book depository. It seems the Combine attempt to learn of human nature; they've taken every book aboard a transport convoy of 3 requisitioned trucks and are en route to the Citadel as we speak. Luckily, he managed to dispatch the message through a liaison before the convoy breached the city limits."

Barney was skeptical, and confused. Usually Kleiner never made jokes, but he talked about it as he did when he preached the necessity of him having a computer. Barney realized how dire a computer would be for their efforts, (many more were still needed) but books?

Barney suddenly had a revelation: "Oh, so these are like, astro-physiologicalâ€|.pyro-technicalâ€|theoretical physical books right?"

"No, Barney, our fellow scientists attempted to salvage as many of those as they could before the Combine patrols saw their destruction. Very few remain; it would be more accurate to say the books are now less significant than the minds that still retain their knowledge. They've attempted to re-scribe them, of course, but it is a collaborative effort that results in a hodge-podge of information that still has many lacunas to fill. But these books, they are of a different charge. Their nature is one of literary prowess that only can be spurred by the human spirit; the kind that could be found at any library at a previous stage in our development. Courage, rebellion, fear, love, all of which emanates between these pages will prove invaluable if we are to dampen the plague that has been imposed on our fellow man."

Kleiner became more impassioned with each successive sentence. He pointed his finger to the ceiling and continued, bordering on excitement.

"Did you know, Barney, that Abraham Lincoln himself attributed the outbreak of the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865â€|"

"Oh great, he's citing dates now" morosed Barney. He knew what this meant.

"â€|to a novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. So impassioned was the nation at her visceral depiction and heart rending in regards to the American slave that they were motivated, NO, FORCED to mobilize and seize the greater good with their own hands..."

Barney had been through this routine before, he awaited his opportunity.

Kleiner sped on "â€|Why, consider the works of Herr Marx and Herr Engels, who sowed the seeds for riots across Europe, taking a crowbar

to the eye of the common man and illustrating a path to succeed. Or Ernesto Guevâ€| "

"Ok Doc" Barney had awaited a syllable gap so he could interject. "I got 'cha."

A pause seeped into the room.

Barney broke it "Speakin' of crowbars, you still have it?"

"Of course, it's here uhâ€| somewhere. It's actually proved quite apt at its intended purpose as well as the one Gordon sought for it; I have opened as many as 24 salvaged crates with it."

"Ya, he'd be proud Doc."

Barney couldn't quite determine why, but he felt an attraction for that crowbar. It could be that it was the last article found of one of his closest friends, or maybe he saw it as a trophy honoring one of the fallen. Either way, he knew he would never part with it.

Kleiner broke Barney's thought "There is a catch, however."

"What cat?"

"No, Barney, CATCH."

"Oh."

"You will have to work with the man within Civil Protection that alerted me to the cache. He is the only one privy and claims that only he knows how to get it done"

"Ok, as long as this isn't an excuse to make this story a crossover, I'll be okay."

"I'm not a tactician, so I will leave it to you two to determine how you will capture the cache and bring all the spoils back here. He has given very specific details about time, location, and checkpoints so I think it will be best if I just let the matter into your hands."

"Ok, you arrange for the usual people to cover my CP shifts?"

"Yes, Barney, I've altered their biometric telemetric receptors so the scanners won't be able to differ between you and your substitute."

The weight of another big ordeal finally took roost upon Barney's shoulders. He took a deep breath and readied himself.

"Alright, Doc, I'll take care of everything."

"Thank you Barney, I know it's is asking much, but I wouldn't ask it of you if I didn't adamantly believe that this held hope for our futures."

Despite Kleiner's usual jesting, Barney knew Isaac would never lead him astray. Beneath his affable mien there was a man of deep concern

for his fellow people. The first days were not easy on either of them; Kleiner really needed support to get through them. A man of his success and drive, and to have suddenly everything robbed from him in a matter of hours, it would tax any soul, and his was an especially ethereal one.

During those darker times Barney fought daily to keep his own spirits up. Not because he needed the support, but because he knew that if he were to let his humor leave him Kleiner would take notice and it would exacerbate his already critical condition. At one point Isaac was not driven to eat for nearly two days.

Barney took notice immediately "This food ain't so bad, beats those microwave casseroles they always issued us back at Black Mesa, eh, Doc?"

The corners of his mouth lit up for the briefest of moments. He felt compelled to keep up with Barney's quip.

"Whatever keeps you from roasting Lamar." They both laughed. It was the first complete sentence he said those entire two days.

The Combine issue spectacles that were forced upon everyone with vision impairments really laid heavily on Isaac's heart as well, which meant it did so on Barney's. It wasn't enough to array their clothing, hair, and housing identically. They stole from Isaac even something as trivial as selecting his unique, patent glasses. There they sat upon his face, a constant reminder that he would never be the person he once was.

Shortly after Barney joined up undercover with CP, he made it a priority to raid the stores that were to be relayed to the Combine; he considered the risk irrelevant. It took weeks, but he eventually found a pair that were nearly identical to the ones he wore before. Once Barney delivered them to him and Isaac alighted them upon his face, they both felt an ember of hope for the future. He was Isaac again.

It took time, but Barney felt he played a part in getting Isaac back up to a semblance of being his old self, which is more than what likely 90% of the population could say at the time. Barney pondered over this a while. Perhaps, this is what Kleiner meant when he spoke of the books? This, new perspective humanity needs. If he could help anyone else the way he helped the Doc then he would happily devote his entire being to it. He didn't fully understand, but he didn't need to. The Doc's words were good enough for him.

End
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